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**REMARKS  
BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA  
STRENGTHENING EARTHQUAKE RESILIENCE PROGRAM  
LAUNCH CEREMONY  
FIRE SERVICE AND CIVIL DEFENSE TRAINING CENTER  
MIRPUR, DHAKA  
AUGUST 25, 2013**

Audience: 65 disaster response volunteers, FSCD staff, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief,

Ministry of Home Affairs, NGO representatives

Media: Yes

Interpretation: No

Length of Presentation: 5 minutes

M.M. Neazuddin, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Md. Abdul Wazed, Director General, Department of Disaster Management

Brigadier General Ali Ahmed Khan, Director General, Fire Service and Civil Defense Authority

... and all of you ... professional first responders ... volunteer first responders ... all of you who, like me, believe in being prepared ... being prepared to respond to a disaster, especially a major earthquake,

Asalaam ‘malaikum and good morning

I picked up the report and started reading ...

“Dhaka is among the top twenty cities in the world ...”

“Wow,” I exclaimed aloud, “Dhaka is in the top twenty cities of the world ... there are hundreds and hundreds of big cities ... this is really a big deal ...”

I was quite impressed ...

... until I resumed reading, “Dhaka is in the top twenty cities of the world in terms of vulnerability to earthquakes.”

That took my breath away. Dhaka is among the twenty most vulnerable cities in the world to an earthquake disaster ... that elicited another “wow,” but this time much more somber.

Indeed, the specter of a major earthquake hitting Dhaka is real. As I said at a huge exercise last week on earthquake preparedness, it is not a question of whether an earthquake hits Dhaka, or if an earthquake hits Dhaka; it is only a question of when will an earthquake hit Dhaka ... when will an earthquake hit Dhaka? We simply do not know ... it could be next week, next month, next year, next decade ... we don't know.

But we do know this. We know that Bangladesh knows the value of disaster preparedness. When it comes to cyclones, floods, tidal surges, Bangladesh sets the global standard for preparedness.

But in terms of preparedness for a major earthquake, Bangladesh has far to go.

According to government estimates, 75,000 buildings would collapse in Dhaka if the city were hit by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake. A disaster of such magnitude is hard to imagine ... can you imagine 75,000 Rana Plazas? Some governments might say such a disaster is too horrific to think about ... so, let's not think about it.

But the Government of Bangladesh has chosen a different path ... it is not only thinking about an earthquake disaster; it is preparing for an earthquake disaster ... your presence here this morning is testimony that Bangladesh is working right now to prepare for an earthquake.

I am pleased that America is Bangladesh's partner in preparing for a major earthquake. Already this year, America and Bangladesh have partnered to host three large exercises to assess and build Bangladesh's ability to respond to an earthquake, to identify shortcomings and vulnerabilities in Bangladesh's capacity to respond, and to chart a course of action for redressing these challenges. These exercises were invaluable in helping Bangladesh better prepare for an earthquake.

Today, the partnership between America and Bangladesh for earthquake preparedness takes another step forward.

Today, we – America and Bangladesh – join hands to launch the Strengthening Earthquake Resilience program ... this \$800,000 new partnership applies the lessons learned in earlier exercises ... this partnership recognizes the critical importance of what happens during the first minutes after the shaking stops ... this partnership endeavors to enhance the capacity of professional first responders to respond more effectively ... this partnership endeavors to train medical staff at major hospitals in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet ... three cities most vulnerable to earthquakes ... on how to deal effectively with mass casualties.

Engaging with first responders and with hospital staff, this partnership helps address some of the serious challenges confronting Bangladesh as it grapples to prepare for an earthquake disaster.

Meanwhile, the Government of Bangladesh is confronting a range of other fundamental issues that will impact the government's ability to respond effectively to an earthquake ... issues such as ensuring that hospitals and other essential structures meet seismic standards and will survive an earthquake intact, identifying key decision makers and undertaking to ensure their ability to survive a disaster, creating an emergency communications system that would replace the destroyed landline and cell phone systems, building an earthquake proof disaster management center, identifying, training and equipping tens of thousands of professional and volunteer rescuers, so they can carry out their rescue missions without endangering themselves or further injuring the victims ... these are just a few of the issues that Bangladesh must tackle as planning and preparation for a major earthquake advance.

Knowing well the spirit, tenacity and resilience of the people of Bangladesh, I am confident that the government, military, civil society, people of this great nation will all pull together to ensure that the nation is as prepared as possible for a major earthquake.

I commit myself, my mission and my government to continue to partner with Bangladesh to advance earthquake disaster preparedness. In this spirit I do hereby officially launch the Strengthening Earthquake Resilience partnership between America and Bangladesh.

Thank you.

Richard ... Richard Greene, USAID Mission Director ... perhaps you could provide some details about this new program?

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*\*As prepared for delivery.*